

FIRESTORM

MICHAEL ARCHER



New Book Recounts Adventures Of Firefighters Trapped In Central American Uprising! They set out to save their company. They ended up saving an entire nation!

Los Angeles, California (February 8, 2005) – Firebomber Publications (www.firebomberpublications.com) is pleased to announce **FIRESTORM**, an exciting new novel by author Michael Archer. In it, members of the privately-owned firefighting company Firebombers Incorporated are pursued into the jungles of Central America by a druglord army intent on holding them hostage to prevent U.S. intervention in the druglord's government coup.

Joseph Talon, billionaire entrepreneur and founder of the high-tech firefighting company "Firebombers Incorporated" takes a desperate gamble to stave off bankruptcy by leading the organization down to the Central American republic of San Pietro. However, his hopes of winning a long-term firefighting contract from the fledgling government are sidetracked by a revolt incited by druglords intent on wresting control of the country from the legitimate government. When a group of his firefighters is trapped deep in the jungle, cut off from help, and surrounded by guerillas, Joe is forced to make an agonizing choice: Hope that he can ransom his people from the druglords... or try to rescue them from the midst of an overwhelmingly powerful enemy force.

An engine company and a company of firefighters is heading for an airstrip where they will be flown back to the capital of San Pietro after having extinguished a wildland blaze. Their military escort is virtually wiped out within moments in an ambush by druglord mercenaries, forcing the unarmed firefighters to flee into the jungle. While most of the engine company escapes, the rest of the firefighters are pursued to a remote telephone relay station. Besieged by 5,000 guerillas led by battle-hardened mercenaries, the firefighters and a small contingent of U.S. artillerymen (that's a long story) are faced with the daunting task of holding off the druglord's soldiers until help can arrive. It will take at least two days before a relief force can reach them. What are the chances that 300 firefighters, 70 soldiers, 3 technicians, and an engineer armed with one M-16 and three .22-caliber rifles can hold off this force of heavily-armed guerillas?

An Air Force AC-130U gunship flying over the middle of the Gulf of Mexico is running out of fuel. Too far from land in any direction to safely touch down, unable to refuel in the air due to battle damage, what can the firefighter transport pilot manning the controls (that's another long story) do to get the crew home safely?

And who exactly is the mysterious new commander of the 701st Firejumper company, John Standing Bear?

FIRESTORM is dedicated to the men and women who have served in the U.S. armed forces and, as such, has a strong military flavor to the action. Many of the members of Firebombers Incorporated are veterans or reservists representing all branches of the U.S. military, something which proves to be decisive as the story progresses.

"In **FIRESTORM**, Mr. Archer offers a story of excitement and high drama... and what the author delivers exceeds expectations. The concept is interesting and intriguing. Both internal and external conflicts are skillfully interwoven, creating a seamless story with a powerful impact. Pacing throughout the book is quick, with building tension driving the plot to a satisfying ending" – Writer's Digest

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Michael Archer holds degrees in Agriculture, Electronics, and Engineering Technology. An avid student of military history, he was intrigued by the similarities between military operations and wildland firefighting, and with the potential for applying modern technology to fighting the age-old scourge of wildfires.

ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

Firebomber Publications is a small press dedicated to providing exciting firefighting fiction to the general public. Fifty percent of the profits from the sale of Firebombers Incorporated books and merchandise goes to firefighting relief agencies supporting the families of injured and fallen firefighters.

Title: **FIRESTORM**
Author: Michael Archer
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Address: P.O. Box 128, Glendora, CA 91740
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Available through Baker & Taylor, and also through the following websites: www.firebomberpublications.com, www.emsbooks.com, www.ipfaonline.org, and www.csfa.net.

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Available for interview on short notice

PRAISE FOR FIRESTORM

“In **FIRESTORM**, Mr. Archer offers a story of excitement and high drama... and what the author delivers exceeds expectations. The concept is interesting and intriguing. Both internal and external conflicts are skillfully interwoven, creating a seamless story with a powerful impact. Pacing throughout the book is quick, with building tension driving the plot to a satisfying ending.”

– *Writer’s Digest*

Multi-billionaire Joseph Talon and co-founder of Firebombers Inc has always had a good heart, placing welfare before profits. Now, at the stockholders meeting he announces that the company is on the verge of bankruptcy. What he fails to mention is that in an attempt save it all he has secretly made arrangements to take the company to international level. First stop Central America and the city of San Pietro. A decision, he will soon regret.

FIRESTORM is a steady pace, well written and author Michael Archer’s attention to detail is absolutely engrossing. Archer places readers deep within danger zones faced by firefighters today, but even more exciting is the unusual situation into which Joseph Talon forces his company.

Government uprising, the jungles of Central America, gun-toting locals, secret weapons, and kidnappings are but a few of what to expect.

What turns up the heat in this novel is the firefighters’ backgrounds, not your typical American citizens. Each has been carefully selected for their military combat experience!

FIRESTORM is pure entertainment of nonstop action and suspense. Michael Archer exceeds expectations!

– *Betsie’s Literary Page*

“This book has it all. A possible corporate bankruptcy, civil war in a foreign country, and wildland firefighting.

Joe Talon must save his private firefighting company from bankruptcy, his firefighters from drug lords in a foreign country, and fight a wildland inferno at the same time. Can he do it?

Although this is a work of fiction, it is a must read for anyone who wants to learn about the perils of wildland firefighting. **FIRESTORM** is full of action and a very enjoyable read”

– *Roger Bair, President Ohio State Firefighters Association*

“...portrays [firefighting] realistically ...I enjoyed it and feel there are a number of firefighters who might also”

– *Kevin McMasters, President Arkansas State Firefighter's Association*

“**FIRESTORM** is action-packed and will keep the reader enthralled throughout”

– *Julie Herath, The Nashville News*

Families of Injured and Fallen Firefighters Struggling Under Minimal Benefits

Los Angeles, California (July 5, 2004) – A fire engine rushing to a fire breaks down on a foggy country road. The 19-year old volunteer firefighter driving the fire engine sees a friend driving his pickup in the opposite direction and flags him down. When the firefighter sprints across the road to borrow a chain so the fire engine can be towed, a speeding van darts out of the fog and the firefighter is struck and killed.

Compounding this tragedy, because his fire chief wrote up the report “He was crossing the road to get a chain to pull the fire truck back to the station” without including the fact he was on his way to a fire, the firefighter’s pregnant wife is denied the \$267,000 federal Public Safety Officer Benefit (PSOB) death benefit and only \$50,000 of the \$154,000 state death benefit is paid out, money she desperately needs for her family of two kids.

A veteran firefighter with 30 years of service is instructing a class on breather gear and smoke inhalation effects in a smoke-filled training room. His breathing gear malfunctions and he begins breathing smoke. Unable to catch his breath, the firefighter suffers a massive heart-attack and dies. Since he was only conducting a training session, not participating in an actual fire, his family is also denied full death benefits.

In many cases, similar stories apply to firefighters who may be part-time or volunteers. Cash-strapped states and municipalities may restrict access to death benefit funds, as does the federal government. For instance, since 1958, over 150 air-tanker pilots have died in the line of duty and none of them have been eligible for the PSOB death benefit due to the fact they are viewed as civilian contractors, not employees of federal or state agencies.

To combat this problem, Firebomber Publications has entered into a strategic partnership with Emergency Training Associates (ETA) designed to provide expanded fund-raising capability to organizations that support firefighters.

“ETA has agreed to provide a 25% commission (50% of the publisher’s net profits) for the first two novels in the Firebombers Incorporated saga (**Firebombers Incorporated** and the newly-released sequel, **Firestorm**) while also providing a commission of up to 10% on many other items on the ETA websites to qualified firefighter support organizations who join this program as affiliates”, stated Lou Jordan, President of ETA.

“This is our way of supporting the brave men and women who put their lives in jeopardy day after day, yet end up at the end of the line (or left out in the cold) when it comes to benefits”, said Firebomber Publications publisher Michael Archer. “They are often forced to work with outdated or faulty equipment because there is no funding to buy new gear. By joining the affiliates program, even the smallest fire department or charity will not only get help to buy new equipment, but the program will also provide funds for the families of injured or fallen firefighters within their jurisdiction”.

“We are enthusiastic about this new program!”, said Monty Gearhart, Director of Ways and Means for the California State Firefighters Association (CSFA), a member of the affiliates program. “Not only can visitors to our site (www.csfa.net) get a great read, but they also help CSFA financially, since we get a portion of the profits every time they buy a copy of FIRESTORM or FIREBOMBERS INCORPORATED”.

About ETA

Emergency Training Associates is the parent company that owns and operates 4 divisions, all serving the Emergency Services Community. EMSBooks, FirehouseBooks, EmergencyTees and FirehouseFoods have grown into specific divisions of ETA over the years. Website: www.emergencybookstore.com

About Firebomber Publications

Firebomber Publications is a small press dedicated to providing exciting firefighting fiction to the general public. Firebomber Publications donates 50% of the profits from sales of the “Firebombers Incorporated” product line to organizations that support the families of injured and fallen firefighters. Website: www.firebomberpublications.com

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FUND-RAISING PROPOSAL

To better serve the firefighter community, Emergency Training Associates (ETA) and Firebomber Publications have entered into a strategic partnership that provides the following benefits to organizations that support the firefighting community:

- 1) ETA is offering membership in its affiliate program to qualified firefighter support organizations.
 - 2) The affiliate will receive a **25% commission** (50% of the author's profits) for every copy of Firebomber Publications' novels ("Firebombers Incorporated" and "Firestorm") that is sold through the affiliate's website.
 - 3) The affiliate will receive **up to a 10% commission** on selected products from the FirehouseBooks.com, FirehouseFoods.com, EMSBooks.com, and EmergencyTees.com websites that is sold through the affiliate's website.
 - 4) ETA will handle sales, shipping, returns, and storage of both books and merchandise – affiliates will not have to order, pay for, ship, nor store any books or merchandise from either ETA or Firebomber Publications.
- The affiliate will be required to put a link on their website to ETA's website per instructions to be provided when approved as an affiliate.
 - Commissions that are earned from sales of Firebomber Publications' novels must be used to support the families of injured and fallen firefighters.
 - Commissions that are earned from FirehouseBooks.com, FirehouseFoods.com, EMSBooks.com, and EmergencyTees.com websites can be used for any purpose (purchasing equipment, funding training, facility repairs, etc.)
 - Detailed sales reports will be provided by ETA to help determine how much money the affiliate earned in each category.

For more information on this unique program, please contact:

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Department of Homeland Security
Federal Emergency Management Agency

U.S. Fire Administration
Working for a Fire Safe America

Press Release

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Firefighter Fatality Figures Show 110 On-Duty Deaths In 2003, An Increase Over 2002

These fatality statistics for 2003 are provisional and subject to change as the USFA contacts State Fire Marshals at the beginning of each year to verify the names of firefighters reported to have died on-duty during the previous year and expects to have the annual fatality report completed by June.

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Despite advances in firefighting equipment, training and communication, 110 firefighters died while on-duty in the United States in 2003, an increase over the 100 deaths recorded in 2002, according to figures released today by the Department of Homeland Security's Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). According to a review of the deaths, 36 states and Guam saw at least one firefighter die last year.

"The sacrifice of this nation's firefighters is heartbreakingly real, directly affecting their communities and departments - and especially the families they leave behind," said Michael D. Brown, Under Secretary for Emergency Preparedness and Response. "As President Bush has noted, these men and women are the front lines of homeland defense. We mourn the loss of these heroes."

R. David Paulison, the Administrator of the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA), part of FEMA, pledged to continue his efforts to reduce the number of firefighters who die each year.

"Firefighters continue to give their lives while serving their communities. In 2003, President Bush signed a bill into law that will provide benefits to the survivors of firefighters who suffer heart attacks and die in the line of duty," said Paulison. "We are thankful to the President and Congress for this benefit, but I earnestly hope that the efforts of the USFA will ensure those benefits are used less and less each year."

In 2003, 29 firefighters died in wildland firefighting incidents. This total is higher than in any year since 1994 when 36 firefighters died in association with wildland fires, including 14 firefighters who died on Storm King Mountain in Colorado on July 6, 1994.

According to the USFA, 20 firefighters died in seven incidents where more than one firefighter was killed. Eight Oregon firefighters were killed in a vehicle accident as they returned from fighting wildland fires; two Memphis firefighters died while fighting a fire in a business in June; two Idaho firefighters were killed in July when a wildland fire spread quickly and trapped them; two firefighters died as a result of a helicopter crash in Arizona in July; two Ohio firefighters were killed while operating at a silo fire in October; two Nevada-based firefighters were killed in an October airtanker crash in California; and two Oregon firefighters died in a helicopter crash in October.

Career firefighters, those who are employed full-time as firefighters, comprised 30 deaths (27 percent) in 2003. Volunteer, seasonal, and part-time firefighters accounted for 80 deaths. The majority of firefighter fatalities in 2003 occurred in relation to a fire or medical emergency incident. Sixty percent of the firefighters who died while on-duty in 2003 suffered fatal injuries or illnesses in emergency situations. Twenty-two firefighters died as they responded to an emergency or returned from one, many of these deaths involved vehicle collisions. Eleven deaths occurred during training.

The USFA collects and analyzes information about firefighter deaths each year to determine trends, make recommendations for further research or to propose changes in procedures that may serve to reduce fatalities in the future.

On March 1, 2003, FEMA became part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. FEMA's continuing mission within the new department is to lead the effort to prepare the nation for all hazards and effectively manage federal response and recovery efforts following any national incident. FEMA also initiates proactive mitigation activities, trains first responders, and manages the National Flood Insurance Program and the U.S. Fire Administration

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WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS PICTURE?

by Michael Archer



Ah, the wilderness! Breathtaking vistas, abundant wildlife, and few reminders of civilization. Sounds idyllic, doesn't it? So you find an available lot on a high ridge above an expanse of forested land that offers a glorious view of the valley below. You love the view, the smells of the forest all around, the lack of the signs of civilization. Should you buy it immediately? What could possibly be wrong with this picture? Plenty!

Fire is a danger to any home bordering on the wilderness. Over the past ten years, millions of acres in the western U.S. have gone up in smoke, taking many homes with them. Just as you choose a place to live based on crime-rate, schools, and nearness to work, so you have to add to these considerations a new one when building near the wildlands: Fire. Just as you lock your home to keep the thieves out, so you need to consider "locking" or protecting your home from fire. What does the savvy wilderness homeowner need to know about in regards to wildfires? Three primary factors to consider are fuel, weather, and topography.

Fuels

Fuels come in three densities. Light fuels include grasses and seedlings, small plants that, when dry, quickly ignite, but burn out in less than five minutes. Medium fuels such as brush will burn longer, typically within five to ten minutes. Heavy fuels like trees, logs, and large debris can burn for up to an hour and retain heat long after the flame front has passed.

Fuels are also broken into three general groups: Aerial fuels, surface fuels and ground fuels. Aerial fuels consist of vegetation, both alive and dead, that exist in the forest canopy (tree tops) and can include high brush, moss, tree branches, and the like. Surface fuels consist of vegetation that is below the canopy, such as brush; fallen bark, twigs and branches; and the leftovers from logging, such as tree limbs, also known as "slash". Augmenting surface fuels and last on the list are the ground fuels. This is material of similar composition to surface fuels, but buried under the ground. Ground fuels include peat moss, tree roots, and decomposing matter, like leaves, duff, and logs. Of these three fuel groups, surface fuels are the most important because they often determine the intensity of a fire.

Moisture content varies seasonally in live fuels, daily in dead fuels. Live fuels can be influenced by drought, insect infestation, arboreal diseases, and temperature variation, but, aside from certain foliage that contains combustible oils, will hold up better in the face of a fire than dead foliage, which is at the mercy of the weather more than anything else. As the relative humidity changes, so too does the combustibility of dead vegetation.

Weather Influences

There are several types of weather that can have an influence on fire behavior. The notorious Santa Anas that occur in the L.A. area (and which may have different names in different regions, such as Chinooks, East Winds, or, as meteorologists call them, foehn winds) can be the bane of firefighters. Unstable air, such as thunder cells, can produce lightning and strong variable winds. Low-level maxima or “jet streams”, which are generally high above the ground, can drop to ground level at any time of the year and anywhere in the country, having a deleterious effect on any fire suppression going on in the region. Sea breeze fronts, where the heating of the land and adjoining sea changes pressure enough that marine air is forced inland, usually do not cause firefighters pause, but can produce gentle breezes that either cool the area and increase the relative humidity, or may simply push a fire along a little faster. Low pressure areas produce an air-mass that swirls in a counter-clockwise fashion (in the southern hemisphere it goes clockwise), producing more moisture at ground level, which is good for fire suppression. Its opposite number, the high-pressure area, swirls in a clockwise direction (in the northern hemisphere), increasing pressure towards the center, which reduces moisture content and kicks up the wind.

So how does a non-meteorologist find out what the weather is like all through the year at their potential dream house? Checking weather records for a given area can be informative. Local newspapers may keep records of this data, and certainly the National Weather Service keeps detailed records as well for many regions of the country. Talking to local residents can be instructive as well, as they may know the peculiarities of the local weather and what signs to be aware of that might influence the fire hazard.

Topography

Many of the most expensive homes in the U.S. are built in the worst possible location. There are a number of things a potential homeowner needs to look for in surveying a lot where he or she wants to build their dream home.

Slopes can have a profound effect on fires – a 30% slope will cause a fire to move twice as fast as it would on level ground. A south-facing slope is the most likely to have problems with dry brush and trees. Typically, this is the area where the trees are thinnest and grass is more prevalent. The relative humidity is lower here, mostly due to more intense sunlight than, say, the north face would receive. The average temperature will be higher here and, as a result, a fire will spread more quickly here than anywhere else. A north-facing slope is the exact opposite of the south-facing slope. Since snows melt later and rainwater is held longer in the soil, trees will be more prevalent, foliage will be heavier and retain a higher moisture content, relative humidity is higher and the rate of spread of a fire should be less, depending on the fuel and weather components of the area. The east and west sides of a hill will provide a blend of the north and south aspects. The principal unique features of these areas is that the eastern side will heat sooner than any other slope during the day and the western slope will cool latest in the day.

Being king of the hill has an additional hazard during a fire: The farther down the hill the fire starts, the more fuel it has going uphill and the hotter and wider the flame front will be when it reaches the top. This means that a steep, brush-covered hill is a real danger to any residence above it, especially if it faces south. Another fact of ridge fires is that the wind produces a “leeward eddy”, a phenomenon that causes the air (or fire) to swirl around and blow against structures from two sides at once, something which can be very damaging to a home as the fire can hit front and back simultaneously.

An interesting local phenomenon that is a combination of weather and topography is a “thermal barrier”. This is a situation where, in a canyon, a layer of warm air forms about halfway up a slope, trapping cooler air in the bottom of the canyon. In a wilderness canyon it has the following effect: As night falls, cooler air collects in the valley’s deepest points and a warmer air mass collects on top, increasing the temperature and lowering the relative humidity compared to other parts of the canyon. This means that a fire in the canyon will remain most active in the area immediately above this thermal barrier, so homes midway up the slope could be at greater risk even than those on the summit during a nighttime blaze.

It seems that the obvious choice for building a home in a canyon would be in the deepest part of the valley, as this appears to be the spot least likely to be threatened. Not necessarily. Firebrands are not all embers – some are logs. Debris rolling out of a fire that is up on the slope of a canyon may start fires all the way down the slope into the valley. It is therefore wise to make sure there is no loose debris above your property *before* a fire breaks out. Wind can also increase in velocity as it whistles down a canyon with steep walls and a narrow floor.

Another topographical feature is a “saddle”. This is a valley that crosses a ridge. As the valley concentrates wind, so too does a saddle, creating a “path of least resistance” to fire. Two other features that should be considered are box canyons and what firefighters call “chimneys”. Box canyons are canyons that dead-end. These allow fuel to pre-heat at the blocked end, increasing the likelihood of a fire. Chimneys are steep narrow canyons that rise up towards a ridge. These are very dangerous in a fire, as the air pressure differential combined with the rising slope draws fire up into them at a rapid advance. It is best not to buy or build a home located at the top of a chimney and be cautious about building in a box canyon.

Ironically, even though it may be more hazardous to have a home on a ridge, the higher a home is in the mountains the danger of fire decreases because snow levels last later into the year and the air temperature is reduced, further decreasing the likelihood of a fire. So, aside from the increased chance of lightning strikes, having a home on the top of a ridge at high altitude may actually be safer than having a home in a valley at sea level.

Defensible Space

As can be seen from the previous discussion, most locations have some disadvantage in regards to fire. Location is an important starting point, but the homeowner (either existing or aspiring) can do some things to further protect their home from fire. The term “Defensible Space” has been created to describe a philosophy of landscaping that incorporates years of experience in protecting a home from fire. The definition of Defensible Space is “the area around a building that has been significantly modified so that a wildfire’s intensity will be reduced enough to prevent the fire from igniting the house and allow fire fighters to safely defend the house”. Here are some of the essential tenets. Clearing brush and trees away from the property for a distance of at least thirty feet is a cardinal rule in creating Defensible Space. Man-made objects, such as driveways, lawns, walls, fountains, and man-made streams form another important part of the strategy. Types of plants selected for use adjacent to structures and out for a distance of thirty feet should be carefully reviewed to reduce fire danger. Trimming of natural foliage and clearing of dense underbrush around trees needs to be accomplished as well. Finally, the right selection of building materials for the house needs to be made (fire-resistant materials, self-cleaning gutters, boxed eaves, etc).

What's Right With This Picture?



So, after reading all this, you may be thinking: ‘Is there any way I can live securely on the fringe of the wilderness?’ The answer: You bet! By being aware of these problems before purchasing land, or by following well established principles for “firewise” living if you already own property, you can have the best of both worlds – enjoyment of the wilderness and the feeling of security that comes from knowing that you’re prepared in case of a fire. Compare the photo at the beginning of this article with the one shown above. The property shown here is on level ground with a good clearance from the trees and well back from the edge of the ridge. The situation can be further improved by clearing the grass and the few remaining trees, creating a Defensible Space. The first photo showed a tangled thicket up close to the edge of the ridge where the photo was taken. In addition, the property would be perched right on the rim of the hilltop, inviting the “leeward eddy” mentioned previously. The location on this page still has the view of the valley below, but without the encroaching forest, and is well back from the edge of the slope. This is a more firewise location and will reward the owner with the best of both worlds – a pristine natural environment and Defensible Space around your home.

You’ve seen many cautions about where not to build. The best places to build would be away from the danger zones mentioned in the article, such as the rim of a ridge. Being on top of a hill, but away from the edge of the hill would be better. Obviously, being in the flatlands would be safer unless there were strong winds coming out of nearby canyons or across sweeping plains. You have a choice when selecting where to build: You can elect to ignore the dangers and simply build where your heart tells you, or you can listen to your head and choose an area that may not be quite as appealing, but still has beautiful vistas and is more defensible (which may even increase the value of the property). So, what’s your choice?

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*Reprinted from **HOME & fire** magazine, Fall 2004 Issue*

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1) What prompted you to write Firestorm?
- 2) What is the story about?
- 3) What got you interested in firefighting?
- 4) Why do you give such a large percentage of sales away?
- 5) Who do you support?
- 6) Why did you start Firebomber Publications?
- 7) What do you get out of this?
- 8) You used to be an engineer. Why the career change?
- 9) Why do you think so few firefighting novels have been written?
- 10) So, what's next?

Biography for Michael Archer

Michael Archer is a native Californian, born in Pasadena and raised in Monrovia, outside L.A. He originally planned to be a science teacher, but later decided to pursue pre-veterinary medicine. After graduating from California State Polytechnic University (Cal Poly), Pomona, with a Bachelor's degree in Animal Science, Mike decided to once again change his career track, and began taking classes in Electronics at Citrus Junior College in Glendora.

Upon graduation, Mike worked in the telecommunications industry before hiring on at General Dynamics in Pomona, working on military radar and gun-control systems as a technician, later as a test engineer, and, for a brief time, as a radar research lab supervisor. When he was laid off from General Dynamics during the defense downturn in early 1991, he became a full-time student at Cal Poly again, graduating with a Bachelor's degree in Engineering Technology in late 1992.

During the time he had been finishing up the ET degree, Mike had been daydreaming about a high-tech firefighting outfit. Immediately after graduating, he began extensive research on firefighting, finally writing "Firebombers Incorporated" in early 1993. He began sending it off for review late in the year.

Hired by Printrak (a fingerprint identification company) in January 1994, work demands and the lack of interest from mainstream publishers diminished Mike's enthusiasm for pursuing writing and he did little with the book until six years later. Chagrined that publishers still rejected his story, he decided in 2001 to try self-publishing, first in e-book format on CD-ROM. The next year, the novel was printed in paperback and received more interest, including a very favorable review in Wildland Firefighter Magazine. During this period and after many failed attempts to recruit artistic family and friends to create illustrations from the story, unit insignias, and line drawings of the equipment, he decided to do this himself. He also self-studied HTML, then created a website with these illustrations and links to other related sites in order to add interest to the storyline for the planned series of books. On the work front, Mike's string of successes in troubleshooting both hardware and software problems prompted the Director of Systems Integration to nickname him "The Fire Extinguisher" for eliminating "fires" (emergencies) so quickly and efficiently.

In 2003, with the completion of his second novel, "Firestorm", he decided that pursuing self-publishing full-time might be worthwhile. In late 2003, he put his name on the list for a voluntary layoff from Printrak if a layoff occurred in the future. In January of 2004, one did and, after receiving a generous severance package from Printrak, he began the marketing campaign for "Firestorm". Reviews from people with firefighting or military backgrounds, and just ordinary readers, were generally good. Mike's promise of donating 50% of the profits from sales at firefighting conventions spurred interest from many state firefighting associations. The prospects for success look promising and Mike is looking forward to the journey...



King Cobra departing Grass Valley Air Attack Base for home.

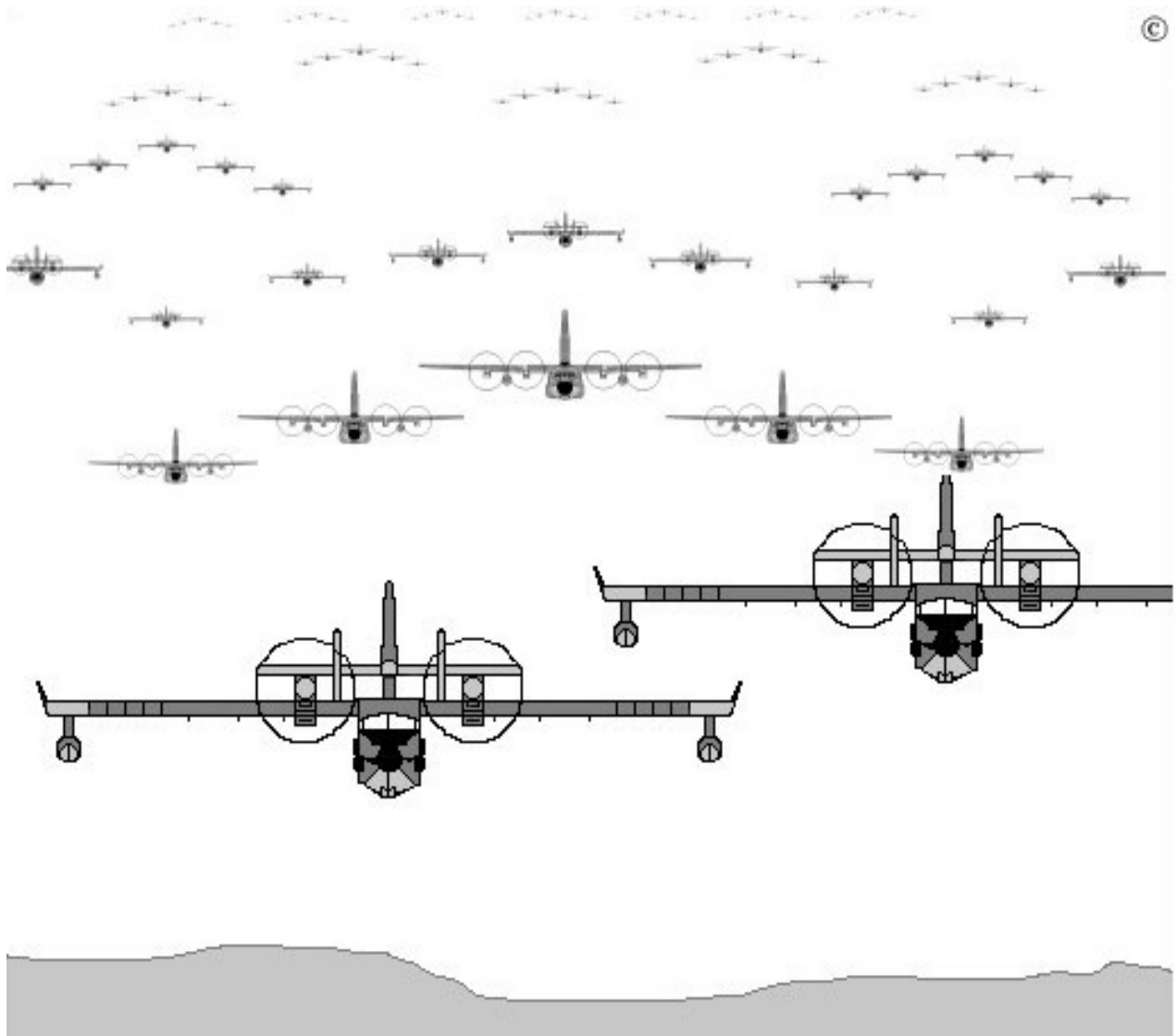
This illustration depicts "King Cobra", a C-130 from the 103rd Lift Squadron (The Knights), using its JATOs to effect a rocket-assisted takeoff from a short municipal runway in the Sierras. This transport aircraft is ferrying members of the 702nd Firejumper Company back to their base in San Bernardino, California. The crowd is composed of residents from several towns saved from destruction by Firebombers Incorporated units, as depicted in the novel "Firebombers Incorporated" (www.firebombersincorporated.com).



© Michael Archer

Gateway C-130 Servicing Area.

The C-130 Servicing Area at Gateway Air Base, home of Firebombers Incorporated, near San Bernardino, California. Several C-130 transports from various transport squadrons can be seen on the tarmac awaiting servicing in between missions. Note the hangars and briefing room behind the aircraft.



FLIGHT TO LA

The Firebombers Incorporated air-wing en-route from Arizona to Los Angeles to help fight a huge brushfire threatening foothill communities, as depicted towards the end of the novel "Firebombers Incorporated". By this point in the story, there are almost 100 aircraft in the air-wing. Two of the customized Canadair CL-415 firebombers can be seen in the front rank. This is the 'Tag-Team', the best firebomber crews in the organization, and part of the 1st Composite Squadron (The Hunters). Behind them are the five KC-130 refuelling tankers comprising 'The Flying Gascans' (301st Refuelling Squadron). Next come the five squadrons of firebombers, and the twelve remaining C-130 transport squadrons bring up the rear.