

HOME

ISSUE SIXTEEN

SUMMER 2018

AS LIFELONG BUILDERS in Santa Barbara, we know the foothills, streams, draws and creeks well. It's easy to get lulled by the spectacular beauty of the coast and steep mountains. Yet, there can be a price to be paid. Multiple large wildfires in Santa Barbara County are commonplace.

THE FURY AND THE STORM

The Thomas Fire, the second largest fire in modern California history, started 40 miles away and took a week to get here before burning into our watershed. With time on their side, Cal Fire—teamed up with multiple agencies from across the West—did an outstanding job of protecting and saving homes locally.

However two weeks later, in the wee hours of January 9, 2018, when Montecito took the brunt of a 200-year storm in a matter of 20 minutes, it was a different story. With six

inches of torrential rain sheeting down, the burned and denuded hillsides couldn't withstand the pelting. Two million cubic yards of mud, boulders, trees and brush peeled off the hills in a fast moving debris flow, destroying 100 homes and damaging 300 others. Tragically, 23 of our neighbors lost their lives.

Resilient Response

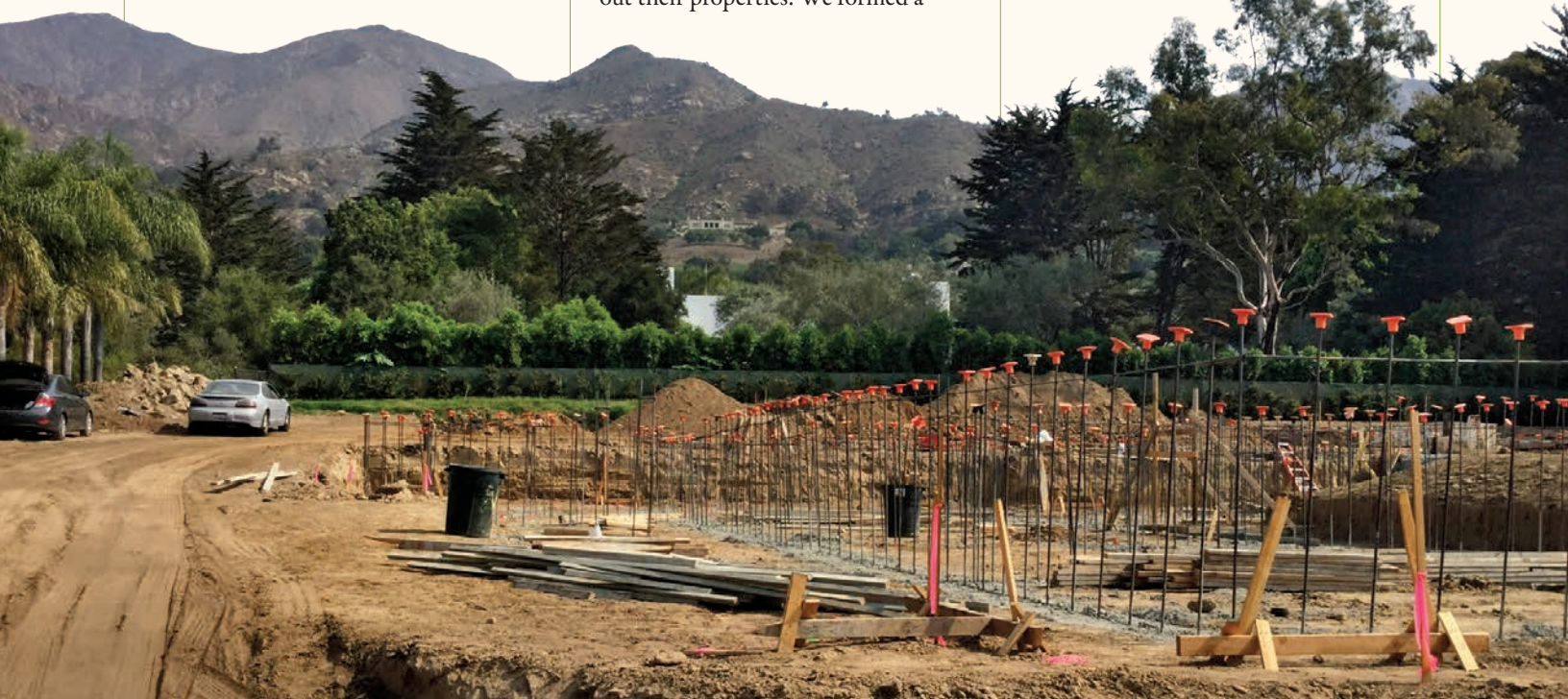
After the heroic rescue efforts by first responders turned into recovery efforts, it was Giffin & Crane's time to prepare to help our neighbors dig out their properties. We formed a

strike team to assess each property and determine which crews and equipment would be needed.

Unlike floodwaters, mud doesn't recede and go away. It must be hauled off site. Some folks just needed a few dump truck loads removed. Others needed hundreds.

Now, several months after the event, most of the mud removal is done. We are beginning to move into restoration of homes and properties.

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Coming to Terms

Geology and history show that a mudflow debris event occurs approximately every 50 years here. With that in mind, what have we learned? What kind of precautions can be taken in rebuilding lives and properties?

A path forward literally has to be mapped out. For homeowners whose properties were damaged to the point of being uninhabitable but restorable, there are the myriad decisions and processes to deal with. Finding temporary housing. Dealing with insurance companies and

adjusters. Determining restoration work and moving forward.

Then there's the emotional turmoil of moving back home. While perhaps technically allowable, some properties may never be built on again. What was once a neighborhood may now have only a home or two and lots of open space.

There are new requirements, regulations and Flood Maps to deal with. It was literally an earth changing event. In some places, the Base Flood Elevation for a 100-year storm is now several feet higher than

it was a few months ago. Architects, engineers, fire marshals, county planners, flood control officials, and builders all have to be consulted. Civil engineers need to verify that restoration will work.

Regaining Momentum

While some folks have opted out, many are committed as ever to their neighborhood, provided it makes sense. For those who decide to stay, there are homes to rebuild and lives to restore.

There is a pioneering spirit, neighbors helping neighbors, gathering facts and information on how to move forward. Thanks to Abe Powell and his team of Bucket Brigade volunteers, an incredible outpouring of people helped dig out homes and community green spaces. While the disaster areas are still hard hit, every day they look a little bit better.

The View Ahead

In three to four years the mountains will have greened up, homes will be restored, and boulders and dirt will be incorporated into landscaping and



gardens. No one wants to go through an event like this again. We intend to be wiser and better prepared.

A good case study is the home pictured here, for which we're doing the cleanup and restoration. It was built by another local builder, Robert Taylor, to the flood standards of the day, in the early 2000s. While it was situated more or less at Ground Zero, and the property inundated with boulders, the home itself withstood the event remarkably well. In fact the homeowner slept through it.

What made it perform so well? It was designed for resiliency, and built by taking into account the Flood Control Maps. The habitable spaces were built above the established Base Flood Elevation (BFE). Breakaway panels in crawlspace walls allowed floodwaters and mud to flow through, with a crawlspace built like an underground parking garage and the home aligned with the flow pattern. These are all lessons that can be applied to the next generation of homes to be built.

In Honor of...

It's easy to forget that Montecito is not just an enclave for the rich and famous. Attracted by the incredible beauty of the community, there are many working folks who live here as well. Our friends and neighbors, the ones we lost, who came from all walks of life and all income levels... they can never be replaced. Each of them helped to define our community. They will be forever missed.

The values that each person brings, each and every day, to restoring the community... that's an enduring testimony. Those day-to-day neighborly interactions of human kindness... that's what makes Montecito, and by extension Santa Barbara, special. Re-establishing normalcy is how we honor those we lost.

— Bruce Giffin

COVER: A new home's foundation is set in Montecito. **THIS AND FACING PAGE:** A case study—this home was built in early 2000s to SB Flood Control standards. **TOP LEFT:** Before the debris flow. **BOTTOM (LEFT TO RIGHT):** After the debris flow. Clean up underway. Post-debris removal, showing very little damage to this home.



HISTORY REPEATS: The Flood of 1969

January 9, 2018, wasn't the first time torrential flooding had visited Montecito. On January 18, 1969, after nine straight days of heavy rain, creeks overflowed with mud and boulders. Geoff Crane was 12 years old at the time, living on Glen Oaks Drive. The Cranes evacuated through the floodwaters in the early morning darkness, holding hands in a family daisy chain.

"San Ysidro Creek got so full that the water started flowing through our house," Crane remembers. "It wasn't as rocky as the recent disaster; it was more of a silty mud. But a lot of people were devastated." Fortunately, there were no deaths during that countywide disaster.

News reports from the time describe the Glen Oaks neighborhood as "a small pocket of tragedy." Residents woke up to the rumble of boulders. People on their roofs were rescued by helicopter. Roads flooded and crumbled. Many creekside homes were badly damaged; some were never rebuilt, and some that were, would again sustain major damage 49 years later.

The Cranes checked into a cottage at the Miramar hotel, and after assessing the damage to their family home, they sold it. Today, that house is gone but the land is part of a bigger property belonging to a Giffin & Crane client. ▲

NEIGHBORS HELPING NEIGHBORS

A Q&A WITH GIFFIN & CRANE FOUNDERS BRUCE GIFFIN AND GEOFF CRANE

Giffin & Crane has a long history of helping clients bounce back from destructive wildfires. But the 1/9 Debris Flow was something else entirely. Not only did it destroy homes—and lives—it left millions of cubic yards of mud and debris in its wake. Ongoing recovery has been a challenge for everybody, but we've made a lot of progress by working together.

Let's start on the morning of January 9th.

Bruce: We were all in shock and awe at the magnitude of the event, seeing raw footage of neighborhoods we've worked in for 40 years suddenly unrecognizable. Fortunately, most of our homes were not impacted, and those that got hit, took the hit.

Geoff: We started getting calls right away from past clients saying they wanted to get in our queue. We had already started reaching out to subcontractors with large crews, such as Steve Hanson Landscaping. We also called excavation contractors Mac Brown and Mike McClellan to give them a heads-up that we were preparing for the worst.

Once you were allowed into the disaster area, how'd you start?

Geoff: Eddie Langhorne with Pat Scott Masonry was very helpful in splitting and moving boulders to create access and parking at some of the properties. One of the most important things for us was helping our past and present clients first. We made that decision early on. That being said, we were able to help whoever called, whether it was something we could handle ourselves or refer to another contractor.

Bruce: We got in and started making assessments of how much

dirt, debris, and boulders were on the properties. Like Geoff mentioned, we had pre-staged the leading trade contractors, and we got those guys together with our strike team—led by Project Manager Dennis Derham and Assistant Project Manager Rudy Raygoza—to begin cleanup. For a property owner, the psychological benefit of just starting to do something—just taking that first step—was huge.

Some projects were just clearing a few dump-truck loads of mud and debris from the driveway. Other clients had acres of land covered with three to four feet of mud and boulders, and debris throughout the first floor of their houses.

What do you do with all that material?

Bruce: It needed to be sorted because mixed loads of mud, boulders, and debris aren't economically feasible to haul away. For awhile, MarBorg—Santa Barbara's waste management company—was unable to take in any more because they couldn't process it fast enough. But we also have owners who want to incorporate the stone into their properties. With rebuilds, I think you're going to see owners wanting to build defensive walls around their homes. One of our favorite properties, built in 1916, had a big masonry motor court wall

that took the brunt of the hit from the debris flow—it probably saved the house.

Any important takeaways so far?

Bruce: One of the big ones is the reminder of how important it is to have a good project manager in charge of a remodel or new construction,



making sure that all the anchor bolts and shear walls are in place and doing what they're supposed to do. That has a significant outcome, whether it's during a debris flow like we just had or a big earthquake in the future.

Geoff: It has really helped being very familiar with our properties. In one case, a client's garage and guest house were badly damaged. The project manager who built that house 20 years ago is still working for us and was immediately on call to ride in with the client. Our guy knew the property so well that he could identify issues right away. He knew where all the utilities were

and the original drainage system we put in. He got into the crawl space and determined that no water had gotten under the house. Having that familiarity with the property really saved a lot of time and brought some relief right away to the client.

What's next?

Geoff: Anything we can do aside from gaining access and cleaning up is going to require permits. Demolition permits have been pretty easy to get. But what comes next is the rebuilding process.

Bruce: We're all working to figure this out—Santa Barbara County

planners, Flood Control, insurance companies, civil engineers, architects, landscape architects, builders and, of course, our clients. Whether it's establishing what the new base flood elevation is, determining the extent of loss and rebuilding costs, as well as imagining what the new landscape should look like, there's a lot of planning going on. It's gratifying to see properties come back together and homeowners move back into their homes. We're all a little wiser. 🏡

The Bianchi residence, a Giffin & Crane-built home, before and after the clean-up from the debris flow.



PROJECT MANAGER DENNIS DERHAM

A MAN OF MANY TALENTS

Along the southern edge of Montecito, a row of small homes features one of the best views in all of Santa Barbara County. It's nature's beauty in three cohesive parts: warm sand easing into a cool Pacific stretching far and wide to the Northern Channel Islands. Enviably, this is the location of Giffin & Crane Project Manager Dennis Derham's day-to-day workspace—a couple of folding chairs and a field-office cabinet loaded with blueprints and paperwork. His Haibike electric bicycle is parked nearby. Enjoying a waterfront commute and ocean-view job site is fitting, he says. "I believe I may have some saltwater pumping through my veins."

Like most of Montecito, this Miramar Beach neighborhood made it through the Thomas Fire and the 1/9 Debris Flow unscathed. But before this beachfront project began, Derham was part of Giffin & Crane's strike team in the disaster area. To better do his job, he drew from personal experience gained in 1988, when his family cabins outside Yellowstone National Park were surrounded by wildfire.

"We were in the hands of God," Derham remembers about the feelings of helplessness. "And it was heroism by first responders that saved the day then, as it did here in



Montecito. As things settled down after the debris flow, our job was to be helpful and understanding, and to provide good advice to simplify complex decision-making as homeowners recover." To help with that, Derham tapped his considerable people skills—he's good at communicating with others, solving problems, resolving conflict, and achieving goals. Much of this skill set was learned early on while he managed large ranch estates in Wyoming after graduating with a degree in natural resource management from the University of Montana.

During those times, Derham and his wife, Leslie, occasionally visited family on the West Coast, and the pull of the sea compelled him to purchase a 40-foot ketch docked in Santa Barbara Harbor. "Leslie and I have always had our eye on Santa Barbara," he remembers. It was only a matter of time before their six children set off on their own, freeing the Derhams to venture west for good. "I did not want to freeze to death in Montana," he says. "We really enjoy the Santa Barbara life-style."

Soon after moving to town, Derham was itching to get back to work. He discovered Giffin & Crane by simply asking around town, having friendly conversations with architects, and noticing signs on custom building sites. "I loved what I heard about their reputation for high quality and standing behind

their work," he says. "I learned that they do what they say and they give it to you straight."

Derham came aboard as a project manager in mid-2017. "I think that Bruce and Geoff appreciated my body of work and the experience that I bring to the job," he says. "I really wanted to hire on with Giffin & Crane, and it has turned out great!"

Indeed. It's been nothing less than a dream job in a dreamy town—with an ocean view. ■

PROJECT MANAGER RUDY RAYGOZA

LOCAL KNOWLEDGE MEETS UPWARD MOBILITY

At the age of 14, Santa Barbara-native Rudy Raygoza added two new endeavors to his life as an impressionable teenager. The first—playing drums—stemmed from an interest in music commonly found in many young men. The second—getting a job—was a necessary step to help support the family as his father slowly went blind from a rare disease. As he grew into manhood, Raygoza's creative outlet and work ethic helped him stay out of trouble, pay the bills, and launch a career in the building trades.

As a musician at Santa Barbara's Church of God of Prophecy, Raygoza has been jamming with the same bandmates for years and typically plays six services a month. Meanwhile, his work life has been a steady show of upward mobility. At 14, he bussed tables at Montecito's Casa Dorinda retirement community. Through high school, he pumped gas at Coast Village Shell, where the roundabout is today. After graduation, he did vocational training and a surveying apprenticeship in San Bernardino. When he got back to town, a friend connected him to Pyramid Tile & Marble, where for next 17 years he worked his way up from fabrication to installation. When the economy started to tank in late 2007, Raygoza took night classes at ITT Tech in Oxnard three times a week,

studying computer-aided design and business management.

"To be honest with you, I wasn't sure if I was qualified to work at Giffin & Crane," Raygoza remembers about the day he saw the ad for an opening at the company. "But when I interviewed with Bruce and Geoff, they seemed like they were extremely good teachers on how the process works. I told them, 'You're the sculptors, and I'm the clay.'" He came aboard as an Assistant Project Manager in the spring of 2017.

His first year was not an easy one. In December of 2017, the Thomas Fire ravaged the mountains above Montecito, threatening hundreds of homes, including a number of Giffin

& Crane projects. Then came the deadly 1/9 Debris Flow. Raygoza was part of our strike team focused on assessment and recovery.

"The damage was so tremendous that you were truly left speechless," Raygoza remembers. "My responsibilities have been to strategize with my team to create a great game plan, and to execute that plan, while at the same time being that person the clients can count on through this difficult process." Raygoza added that he appreciates subcontracting companies that have put differences aside to work together toward rebuilding.

"In Rudy, I think Giffin & Crane saw somebody honest, with a big heart and mind," says Project Manager Dennis Derham, adding that the company, its subcontractors, and ultimately its clients benefit tremendously from the fact that Raygoza is fluently bilingual in English and Spanish. "Giffin & Crane understands the importance of that—throughout the trades."

Off the clock, Raygoza used to lift weights to keep his back strong, but these days he prefers to spend time with his wife—a teacher at Dos Pueblos High School—and their young daughter. And, there's always music. "I've stuck with it so long," he reflects. "I really enjoy it. Man, growing up playing the drums at church and still playing there? It's indescribable." 🏠



FROM OUR CLIENTS IN THE DAYS IMMEDIATELY AFTER JANUARY 9TH

At Giffin & Crane we've always taken pride in our craftsmanship at every step of the building process. Attention to detail makes for beautiful homes, to be sure. But it also the means that our homes and remodels are durable and safe. A few were put to the test on the morning of January 9th.

DEAR DEREK AND GEOFF,

Thank you for reaching out and the kind words. My family made it out safe. We lost a dog but did not lose family. That is all that matters. You should know, we were in the guesthouse when it hit. It was boulders, trees, and mud. The large main house on our property collapsed and most was carried downstream. We likely would not have survived in that house. The guesthouse took a direct hit. We were able to make it to the living room and sunroom, as we heard it coming, before the slide struck the house. Although the bedroom walls collapsed a little, the house took the shot, stayed standing and that is what kept us alive. Even the glass-enclosed sunroom, where we were at that moment, is still upright. The guesthouse, like the main house, is a total loss, but it kept us alive. We will move on, it is all in the hands of the insurance companies, but we will remember how lucky we were. We have now rented a house very close; we won't leave our town.

The previous owner obviously spent enormous money on the guesthouse—everything about it was perfect. We adored it. But ultimately my family's safety was dependent on the quality of construction. I believe that was your project and

your construction. Whoever made that building—in addition to all the incredible materials, surfaces, etc.—they built a tank. It was a horrible night, of course, and when the sun came up, I was able to go get help while my family sat on the kitchen island you probably remember. And, much thanks must go to the previous owner—her desire for quality mattered.

Anyway, I just wanted to say thanks to anyone associated with the construction of the guesthouse. The safety of our families is the only thing we care about. I choose not to think about what would have happened if corners had been cut on the project.

Thank you and quite sincerely,

—BILL

*You should come
by and see the
house you built.
It's the only one
still standing on
the lane.*

— ROBERT

I GOT A CALL from Fran. Her 90-year-old mom lives in a G&C home we built in the hard-hit Olive Mill neighborhood called the Oaks. She said that while there was four feet of mud around the house—and to date they've removed 600 tons just from the downhill side alone—that no mud or water got inside the home. The walls held, the foundation held, and even the three-point locking mechanisms on the French doors held. She said that because of the quality of construction, her infirm mom didn't die in her bed in a sea of mud.

This was supposed to have been a remodel of an existing home. When we started the job, we discovered that there was no steel in the foundation and a fair amount of rot. That was a tough discovery and a tough change order for the clients. We rebuilt the home from the ground up on the same footprint. As a result, a life was saved. Nice work, guys. Thank you and our trades for doing a great job!

— BRUCE GIFFIN

G&C ON THE WEB

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