

The rest of the crew either doesn't hear Dodge's instructions or they hear him, but they don't understand he wants them to join him in the safety of the blackened area. It's also possible that because they knew Hellman they trusted his judgement more than Dodge's so they simply follow his lead and seek their own escape route. In any event, they bolt and continues on a path that takes them on the diagonal across the slope. But the fire is moving at 600 to 700 feet per minute now and the men are quickly caught in a blast of super-heated air and dropped to the hillside.

Within a minute of two the fire catches the crew at 5:56 or 5:57 PM. Jim Harrison's wrist watch stops at 5:56.

Wag Dodge after jumping into his escape fire and trying unsuccessfully to get the crew to join him, finally flattens himself on the hillside as the flaming wall of fire sweeps over him. Three times in the passing of the flaming front he is lifted up off the ground by hot, swirling winds.

Bob Sallee, Walt Rumsey and Eldon Diettert run directly up the slope along the right side of Dodge's escape fire and head for the ridgetop which is only 100 yards or so up the slope. But as they reach the ridgetop, nearly exhausted now, they run smack into a nearly vertical wall of rock running along the top of the ridge. Frantically, Sallee and Rumsey search for an opening. Diettert upon hitting the wall turns to the right trying to find an opening. Sallee and Rumsey finally find an opening amidst the smoke and near panic, and they squeeze through to the other side. Once through the opening they spot a long narrow patch of rocks just off the ridge and down the slope. They scramble to safety in the bottom of the rocks but minutes later are chased to the top of the rock slope as a finger of the fire sweeps over the ridgetop. And then, before they've caught their breaths, yet another finger of fire snakes over the ridgetop and chases them back down to the bottom of their island of safety. Diettert, who had turned right when he hit the wall is trapped by the fire before he's run 200 feet across the slope.

Bill Hellman, who had tried to run up the left side of Dodge's fire, gets to the ridgetop and then he's hit by the fire. Though severely burned he managed to make it through the rock wall and stumbles down the other side of the slope for 200 yards before he stops running.

Back on the Mann Gulch side of the ridge it's 6:10 PM before Dodge can leave his escape fire. He immediately wonders about his crew and begins to call out through the thick smoke and noise of burning material. After about five minutes he hears a weak cry from below him and to the left. He picks his way through the burning trees and stumps and at 6:15 PM finds Joe Sylvia. Sylvia is horribly burned, but he's still conscious and alert. Dodge moves Sylvia to the safety of a large boulder--rocks and burning logs continue to roll down the steep hillside all around them--retrieves Sylvia's canteen and removes his boots. At about 6:30 PM Dodge leaves Sylvia alone on the hillside and heads up to the ridgetop to find the rest of his crew.

Meanwhile, the fire has swept on past Sallee and Rumsey and by 6:15 PM they leave their rock pile and begin searching for the others. At 6:20 PM they discover Bill Hellman just down-slope from them and a little off to the west. Like Sylvia, Hellman is badly burned. They give him a drink of water and what comfort they can offer.

About this time Dodge comes over the ridge and comes down to where Hellman is propped up against a boulder. Dodge tells Sallee and Rumsey that Joe Sylvia is badly burned over in Mann Gulch. Dodge then tells seventeen year old Walt Rumsey to stay with Hellman and that he and Sallee are going to head